GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3324
ANSWERED ON:17.08.2005
LIBERALISING VISA RULES BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN
Yadav Shri Parasnath

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

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(a) whether the journalists of India and Pakistan have urged their respective Governments to liberalise the visa rules;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether in view of the request of the journalists, the Government is contemplating to relax the visa rules;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED)

(a) Yes, Sir

(b) South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA) has been suggesting liberalisation of visa rules by India and Pakistan. During the South Asian Parliamentary Forum organised by SAFMA at Bhurban from May 15-20, 2005, the Association called for revision of visa policies by the Governments concerned and requested to allow free movement of media persons and products across the borders.

(c)&(d) Government has progressively liberalised the visa regime for Pakistani nationals. In September 2004, Government announced liberalised visa procedures for accredited journalists, academicians, professors, Vice-Chancellors medical doctors accompanying patients and visitors for conferences approved by Government. Exemption from Police Reporting for persons above the age of 65 and increase in number of places permitted from 3 up to 12 have also been announced. Liberalised visa scheme for Pakistani students coming to join at school level in reputed international schools and professional courses in recognised educational institutions have been put in place since February 2005. India also introduced grant of visas on arrival at Attari Check-post for people above the age of 65 and below the age of 12 with effect from April 1, 2005. This facility would also be available for members of groups who have been already cleared by Government.

(e) Does not arise.